PASS CHRISTIAN, MS

The Tricentennial

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 11 SEPTEMBER 1,1998

Tricentennial News

"Celebrate The Gulf"

Concessions to Benefit Tricentennial Committee

Event Chairman Ken Austin, reports that the Executive Steering Committee of Celebrate the Gulf has provided the opportunity for the Tricentennial Committee to benefit from beverage concessions. "Celebrate" will be held Saturday, October 17 from 10am to 4pm. "We will be responsible for staffing the vending trailer which will return all net proceeds to our Tricentennial Fund," stated Austin. "Coca-Cola has generously provide the trailer and cups at cost. Volunteers will be needed to help set up and to man the concession stands which may also include popcorn and cotton candy dispensers," continued Austin. Show your spirit, Call Ken at home (452-0080) or at work (452-7444).

"As part of our fall program, volunteers are also needed for the Cemetery Clean-Up following Labor Day. Local Pass Christian cemeteries include *Live Oak, St. Paul's, the Indian Cemetery and the Courtenay Cemetery.* Jean Moreland and Paul Bode will coordinate this effort and there will be jobs for everyone," reported Austin.

Show the Chef in you! Recipes for the *Tricentennial CookBook* continue to arrive by mail. Are you in that number?

JAMES HOMER SPENCE

1875-1946

James Homer Spence ranked third in line of thirteen children, whose parents were Cory Elijah and Jenny Burnham Spence. He grew up on the family estate on Arcadia Road during the days when the main source of overland travel was by foot, or horse and buggy. Spence graduated from the University of Virginia in the field of dentistry, and soon afterwards married Lily Amiel. They settled in their home on East Beach Boulevard, where they raised their five children, and he established his dental practice.

Mayor Spence, or "Doc", as he was often called upon entering politics, was elected mayor for 22 years, affording him the title as the longest standing mayor in Pass Christian. His love for the Pass and its people kept him in touch with almost everyone. He would make his daily rounds stopping to talk, or check off a list of projects needing attention.

The term of office at that time, was two years during the early part of his administration. He and the Board of Aldermen built the City Pavilion, which extended 1000-feet into the sound, located directly south from the

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JAMES HOMER SPENCE

(Continued from page 1)

beach at Davis Avenue. The over-the-water facility provided wonderful entertainment for young and old alike. Dances were held twice weekly with big bands from New Orleans that arrived by the Coast train and were met by a large truck that paraded throughout town as the musicians played Dixieland Jazz. The pavilion had bath houses below the main deck for swimmers, and a wrap-around platform for fishing and crabbing. Security was provided by a night watchman supported by frequent police patrols.

The Spence Administration also directed the construction of the old City Hall, which was located at the corner of Market and Beach Boulevard. Below street level on the beach side was the jail-house. Hurricane Camille destroyed both, the family homestead and City Hall, the two places where Spence stayed most of his time. In his honor, a street was named **Spence.** His surviving direct descendants are Thelma Spence Pulkowski and Lee Spence, in addition to other generation members, including Alderman-at-large Chipper McDermott.

VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION

Due recognition must be rendered concerning the community spirit and inspiration offered by many residents and lovers of the Pass in their coming together during times of need. Although not a time of necessity, the TriCentennial era shall take place in the year 1999, and will be an opportunity to commemorate the heritage and culmination of all of the eventful influences which have caused our City and its surrounding environs and neighborhoods to be such a remarkable place, which is immeasurably free of turmoil and deprivation.

Individual volunteers and service groups have been proven by coming together during this TriCentennial season of common cause and common good. Prior examples of community response for the common good were the acquisition of War Memorial Park, which was accomplished by funds raised by the VFW, Veterans of WWII, and the general public. Another, was the Hurricane Camille memorial which was erected by the consequential leadership of Mrs. Billy Bourdin, the VFW, and the community at-large.

Other projects were the baseball park, White Park, Wildflower Park, Rhea (Trinity) Park, Robinson Park, and others. None of these achievements could have been accomplished without the thankless tasks and volunteer hours by members of various city commissions, school boards, church committees, and social and service organizations.

One of the last significant community-wide celebrations was the **"Bi-Centennial"** of 1976, which commemorated our country's two centuries of freedom. This year and next year will become part of our community's heritage for the hereafter. What we offer and how we perform during this two-year period will demonstrably effect the destiny of our youth by encouraging them to learn and accept moral values by giving of themselves to a common cause. The Pass Christian area has many senior citizens who pride themselves for their personal successes and are demonstrating their faith and goodness in many good causes. Our TriCentennial activities represent and opportunity for everyone to enhance our past heritage and instill a sense of lasting community pride in our young adults and teenagers.

Official TriCentennial 1999 events will schedule a spectacular **"1999 Kick-Off"** Gala, a March 30th **"Re-enactments"**, a May 8th **"Jazz in the Pass"** park festival, and **"Livingston Commemoration Dinner"**, honoring the first developer of Pass Christian.

Set your Calendar

- **Friends of the Library** meets in the Library Conference Room every Friday at 10:00 a.m.
- **Faulkner's World** is currently displayed in excellent black and white prints adorning the conference walls at the Public Library. Photographed by Martin Dain, the presentation is part of the Traveling Exhibition celebrating William Faulkner's Centennial. Dain's photographic images are insightful and impressionistic. Viewings until September 15.
- **Pass Christian Garden Club** meets 1st Thursday, Sept-May at 11:00 a.m.
- **Coast-wide Cleanup Day** is set for Saturday, Sept. 19 starting at 8:00 a.m. Roy Stoddard has been heading up the Pass Christian section of the Coast and asks every available helping hand to show up at his command post at the East side of the Harbor to collect gloves and bags and an assigned area if not the beach area closest to you. It's dirty, but fun and a good way to exercise and release energy. Upon completion, Captain Stoddard will distribute t-shirts and passes along with a shuttle-bus ride to a free lunch at the **Outback Steakhouse** which is arranged from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- **Collage: A Pass Christian Celebration** is the October event weekend that everyone is waiting for. Friday evening, the 16th is **Toast to the Coast**, a Cocktail soiree with music and gourmet foods sponsored by Coast Episcopal School. On Saturday the 17th, 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., is **Celebrate the Gulf**. This is a family affair with hands-on exhibits and activities. Kid's Fishing Rodeo, Aqua Van from the Aquarium of the Americas, scuba diving and fishing gear, live sea animals and more. Corporate, environmental, and City sponsors.
- **Celebrate the Arts** will have back-to-back days on Saturday and Sunday, 17th & 18th, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. displaying arts and crafts shaded by the Oaks at Memorial Park. An added attraction is a special Yacht Club buffet dinner to "Meet the Artists." Reservations required, at $8.50 per person, by calling Mallee Hearin at 452-2140.

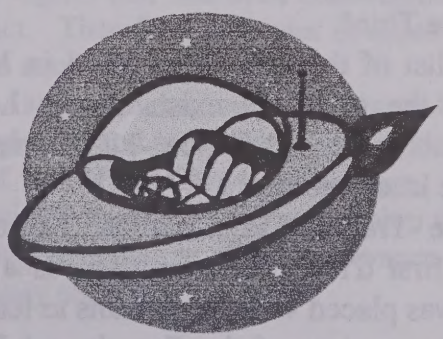
Coast trollies will shuttle all day and evening between events with an exclusive **"Tour of Beach Homes"** scheduled.

Flying Sauciers?

While rummaging through his files for a query of past UFO sightings at the Kiln, Billy Bourdin tracked down news clippings with a few incidents closer to home. In September 1960, Captain Jobie Dennis along with two others reported seeing an "unidentified flying object" early that evening while at the Pass Yacht Club. As they continued to survey the sky, they reported another appearance two hours later. In April 1966, there were two more sightings near Cat Island over Goose Point, which were reported by Cary Bufkin of Taylor's Drug Store. Two nights later, while flounder fishing with Bernard Giadrosich and Luther Tanner, the trio saw the same phenomenon once more, however, the newspaper misprinted saucers and called it a flying *Saucier*.

The next year, in April 1967, a group of volunteer firemen observed a UFO over Henderson Point. Years later, in DeLisle, Edward Meyer recounted that his family had seen a bright ball of light as large as two football fields hovering above an oak tree near his home. That phenomena occurred in August 1971.

Since it has been quite awhile since the last reportings, future UFO sightings may be called in to MUFON at 897-9012



Genealogical View -- Colonial History

by Gloria Moran (5th in a series)

Nap Cassibry's publication, *"The Ladner Odyssey,"* places most members of the first six generations of Ladners in the New World in their respective family lines. It is a somewhat difficult book for a novice to work with, but I recommend it for tracing the Ladners, and many other old family lines in this area.

On August 1, 1781, Nicolas Ladner, whose wife was Marianne Pacquet, was granted Spanish title to Cat Island after making an affidavit that he had occupied the Island since about 1746. His son-in-law, Juan Cuevas of Seville in Andalusia, Spain, acquired a United States title to Cat Island many, many years later.

Cat Island was not, by the way, named by the first French because they mistook the numerous raccoons on the Island for domestic cats which had become wild. Any Canadian would have known that a raccoon is not a domestic cat. *Chat sauvage* is the French-Canadian term for raccoon.

On October 20, 1763, the Bourbon lilies of the Flag of France over Fort Conde at Mobile were lowered, and the British flag was raised to the music of bagpipes. The word went out to all the old French residents that, to retain titles to their lands, they must make the long and arduous journey to Mobile and take the oath of allegiance and fidelity to his Britannic Majesty, George the Third.

A list of those who appeared in Mobile and took the oath still exists in the London British Public Record Office -112 names. (A few of the local ones are:)

Jean Favre -Tradition says that Jean Favre came with the first d'Iberville expedition as a cabin boy and was placed with the Indians to learn the language, a custom of the French and French Canadians;

Francois Barbeau -possibly the origin of the name Boisdore, as this Canadian family carried the "dit", or Nickname, of Boisdore;

Nicholas Christian Lardnare -by this time, 1764, living on Cat Island with wife and beginning of family;

Bartholome Grelot -Gollott of the Biloxi area now; after 1780 obtained Spanish grant to land at northwest end of DeLisle bridge; married into the Nicaise family and daughter married one of the first DeDeaux brothers from France;

Juliet de Brosse Azamari -later as Widow Asmar, married to Francois Carriere;

And a Jean Baptiste Debodent is also on this list, possibly Dubuisson who was in the colony by 1745. A Dubuisson married a Nicaise female in the late 1700's in the Slidell-Bayou Bonfuca area.

CIVIL WAR DATABASE

Along with the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Utah's Army Corps of 440 volunteers have generated an immense database of 3.5 million Civil War combatants, including their regiments and rank when mustered in and out of service.

These will then be edited, state by state at the Utah Mormon church's Family History Department. Upon completion, in 1999, the database will be transferred to the National Park Service's Web site and accessed at visitor centers located in the 30 Civil War parks that it manages.

A major result of this project will permit a simple query to be made to a Web site in order to learn the regiment of any soldier or sailor. With this information, more complete copies of the combatant's records can be retrieved from the National Archives.

Langs of the Coast

While delving into old documents, Eaton A. Lang, Jr., grandson of the late John H. Lang, a pioneer Pass Christian businessman and former mayor during the first decade of the 20th century, found a dated "privilege tax license" to conduct a Public Carriage business at Pass Christian.

It was from his livery stable on Davis and Second streets, that Lang eventually established his funeral business in the same location now occupied by Billy Bourdin's plumbing business.

The elder Lang extended his transportation, funeral business and real estate ventures to Gulfport during the time that Captain Hardy and Captain Jones were formulating the railroad, the port, and the town of Gulfport.

John Lang's son, E.A. "Ad" Lang Sr. continued in real estate, as another son, Arthur W. Lang Sr., continued with the funeral business. Even today, these businesses continue in the hands of grandsons, and even great grandsons, and great, great grandsons.

John Lang carved a significant place in coastal history in many ways. Before his death in 1944, he captured his memoirs by writing *"A History of Harrison County"*, which is regarded as a treasured encapsulation of the past.

Of the license tax, Eaton Lang, Jr. treasures it as a memoir that stipulates the nature of the economic and transportation history of Pass Christian. The $5 license cost in 1878, is a revelation that the Pass was a town in progress and that the few roadways that existed, were accessed by the horses, tally-hos, and dray carriages that were owned by his grandfather.

Historic Markers

Each State has its own jurisdictional control of historic markers and the inscriptions upon them. What was accepted as historically correct at one time may not be perceived as politically correct in another age. A case in point is the State of Virginia, where markers along the state's roadways will be rewritten to delete references to Indians as being "savages", "heathens", or "half-breeds." The argument is that when the state first made the inscriptions, history books were written by foes of Indians. This, of course, makes a moral judgement call.

The TriCentennial Heritage subcommittee has recommended reinstalling the three missing local historic markers referred to as the *Bedsheet Surrender*, *John Henderson*, and *Pass Christian.* Two others were nominated to point out the *Livingston Tract* and the *Charles Asmard Tract.* The Executive Committee accepted the recommendations while submitting two more nominations, one for *"Fort Henry"* and the other for the *"Cuevas/ Pineville"* area. However, a reservation was also referred, concerning the veracity of the "Bedsheet Surrender" marker.

Recently received from Diane and Tony Bruger, owners of the Harbour Oak Inn, is a letter from the Mississippi State Archives. Since the historic marker was nearby their Bed and Breakfast, they inquired if the Department had repossessed it. The reply to their query stated that the *"Bedsheet Surrender"* inscriptions was considered to be a legend that had been contradicted by historic fact. Therefore, a greater in-depth research program needs to be effected.

As good news, our Mayor and Aldermen have endorsed and acted upon funding the replacement of the ***"Pass Christian"*** marker. The TriCentennial Committee and membership thank our governing officials in their observance for this community endeavor.

BUILDING AND BEAUTIFICATION

Site preparations, building construction, and painting and repairs are taking place throughout the whole of Pass Christian. John Ellis III has completed his apartment complexes in East Pass Christian off North Street. On Highway 90, the old shopping center has reached a new stage of renovation for its condo complex. At the west side of town is the huge site development for the new highschool. Across the street at the Elementary School is the nearly completed auditorium. Approaching Henderson Avenue on North Street is the land grading and fill for future storage facilities. The new highway bridge at Henderson Point is near completion of driving its tall concrete pilings. In mid-town, north of the tracks, is the grading and fill for the long awaited new post office facility.

During the past year, along Scenic Drive, much renovation and face uplifts have been occurring. Outstanding is ***"The Exchange"***, whose owners, Walter Ketchings and Carlene Alfonso, resurrected the former distressed building. The Historical Society Building and Allen's Electric building have been greatly refreshed. Quietly, room by room, the Hoffmanns have been studiously restoring the glory of *Union Headquarters* to make the original builder, Pierre Saucier, very proud.

On the west side, Valentino's, Botanica Gardens, Blue Rose, Harbour Oaks Inn, and 122 and 134 E. Scenic have been restored, embellished or repainted. Joining in with appearance changes includes the Public Library and City Hall.

Folks in Pass Christian have good reason to feel good about all of this progress. Mayor Billy McDonald and the Board of Aldermen have been receiving favorable press accounting for their diligent efforts in restoring governmental confidence and bringing municipal budgets and expenses into control. Appreciation and Congratulations are due to everyone responsible!

Pass Christian Garden Club

Getting ready for its approaching season of meetings and events, the Garden Club has prepared a handsome informative handbook with an elegant and timely pen and ink cover commemorating the TriCentennial. Jean Hammett's artful composition displays a scene of d'Iberville's anchored frigate in the Sound with a French flag adorned with golden fleur-de-lys.

The Pass Christian Garden Club was first organized in 1930, reorganized in 1950, and now has 41 active members. The club meets at 11:00 a.m. on first Thursdays of September through May at various locations. Current officers are: Mrs. Pam Williams, Mrs. Amy Wood, Mrs. Marie Leruth, Mrs. Gloria Searcy, Mrs. Mary Catherine Ward, Mrs. Patricia Varisco, Mrs. Jean Moreland, and Mrs. Etta Williams.

Besides on-going beautification programs, this year's targeted educational projects include bird appreciation, horticulture, herb utilization, flower arranging, shade gardening, nurturing African Violets, and d'Iberville appreciation. The organization will also stimulate interest for **Arbor Day** in the local school systems and initiate a coast-wide *"Club Exchange Plants Project."*

The Garden Club's past and present officers and membership are to be complimented for preserving the City of Pass Christian's honored status as an official **"Tree City"** for the past many years. Membership information can be secured from Mrs. Warren Leruth at 452-3861.

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MISSING LINKS

There are a number of missing links in the historical development of Pass Christian. If a researcher loves adversarial conditions and hindrances to analytical discovery, then research on Gulf Coast heritage is a most interesting target. There is not just one archival source but many. In addition, there have been a number of books and other written accounts that proliferate misinformation and distortions that has even included a degree of "creative" journalism. To further magnify the researcher's problem, many documents have not been made easily available. Even today, there is a dearth of material, not easily attainable due to being held closely-guarded by private families and institutions. Letters, photographs, maps, newspapers, diaries, logs, books, and church and government documents are primary source materials which are scattered throughout various repositories that today are located in southern cities and states, Washington D.C.'s national archives, the Caribbean countries of Cuba, Haiti, Santo Doingo; and in European countries of France, Spain, and England.

It is only through pulling together all the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that a true picture becomes complete. With missing pieces, one can only conjecture. However, quite often, even with scientific reasoning, conjecturing may be misinterpreted as genuine and cause an unrealistic presentation of facts.

This often holds true reading localized history books and heritage accounts reported in local newspapers. Mishaps have sometimes occurred in this newsletter. However, responsible reporting can be corrected if the readers continue to send forth verified accounts that will correct misinformation which can be updated in future issues.

FrancoFete

Louisiana's FrancoFete is expected to be part of the promotions which will entice a projected 28 million tourists to our sister state. It was reported that New Orleans will host a March 2 event, as an attempt to get into the *"Guinness Book of World Records"* by making the world's largest French croissant.

Bartram's Trail

In reading "The Travels of William Bartram" as edited by Mark Van Doren, Bartram sailed past our shores from the Rigolets on or about August 30, 1777. He described "the beautiful bay St. Louis, into which descend many delightful rivers" and "sailing through the (Mississippi) sound betwixt Cat island and the strand of the continent" proceding "through the narow pass Aux Christ-ians," and on "between oyster banks and shoals of Ship and Horn islands."

In May 1775, Bartram's explora-tions were traveled upon the known Cherokee Indian paths through the mountains of South Carolina and North Carolina along which he returned to Georgia pursuing the same paths that became known as the *"Bartram Trail."*

D'Iberville Exhibit

The d'Iberville Exhibit is growing and remains on tour. Heritage Chairman, Virgil Harris, executed the move of the **d'Iberville Bronze** by Michele Smith to Annie's Restaurant where it will remain until mid-September. The **d'Iberville Stone** by Brian Nettles is located at the Library, and eight of the **"Flags that flew over the Pass"** can now be viewed at the City Hall council room.

Following an exerted research effort for exactness of appearance and location of the original 1831 Pass Christian Lighthouse, Buddy Diboll will construct an architectural model.

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